

Historic Academic Centre to be Developed for Palestinian Studies



June 25th, 2021 is a memorable day for the Shawky Fahel family and the University of Waterloo. Dean Sheila Ager, Faculty of Arts, and Shawky Fahel signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding that paves the way for the development of a new Centre for Palestinian Studies within the University. The principles of the Centre will be based on a shared vision and a bold approach to peace-building, conflict avoidance, co-existence and cultural understanding through education.

Mr. Fahel is a Palestinian-Canadian who came to Canada, with his family, over 54 years ago, because of the conflict in the Middle East. Over the years, since becoming a Canadian citizen, Shawky has been involved in several efforts involving the Canadian Government, and other organizations, to secure a peaceful and just solution to the lingering Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“During the most recent conflict, I was very impressed to see many young Palestinian adults taking leadership roles in avoiding further conflict and calling once again for along-term just and peaceful solution,” said Shawky. “More than ever, now is the time to build a better understanding of issues through education.”

Mr. Fahel envisions a unique, inclusive and balanced approach to Palestinian focused research and studies that educates and enlightens. Through this new partnership, Shawky desires to create a lasting and meaningful impact on efforts of peace, co-existence, cultural understanding, and acceptance.



Dean Sheila Ager, Faculty of Arts, University of Waterloo and Shawky Fahel sign the historic MOU.

The financial commitment by the Fahel family -Shawky and Kathie, together with their children, Shaddi and Amanda- is building the pathway to establish the new Centre. Shawky will continue this work, with other future donors, to support both the Centre and research and education studies that will be carried out.

The new Centre will build momentum in the community and will increase capacity for Faculty expertise in Palestinian focused studies so that the Faculty of Arts can build a coordinated and unique approach to conflict avoidance and cultural understanding through several initiatives including:

- A high profile, annual public lecture series that will engage expert visiting speakers (academic or non-academic) and highlight contributions to peace-building and conflict avoidance.
- International Student Study Trips to Palestine and Israel.
- Graduate students research grants for a projects under the theme of Palestinian studies.
- Post-Doctoral Fellowships to attract rising stars, who have a Palestinian heritage, to the University of Waterloo.



Former University of Waterloo President and Vice-Chancellor, Feridun Hamdullahpur (I) with Shawky Fahel.

This important partnership will be kicked off, later this year, with the first guest lecturer in honour of Feridun Hamdullahpur's tenure as President and Vice-Chancellor of the University.



Participating in the signing of the MOU were (l to r) Joanne Shoveller, UofW Vice President; Feridun Hamdullahpur, UofW former President; Shawky Fahel; Sheila Ager, UofW Dean of Arts.